The Modern English Novel

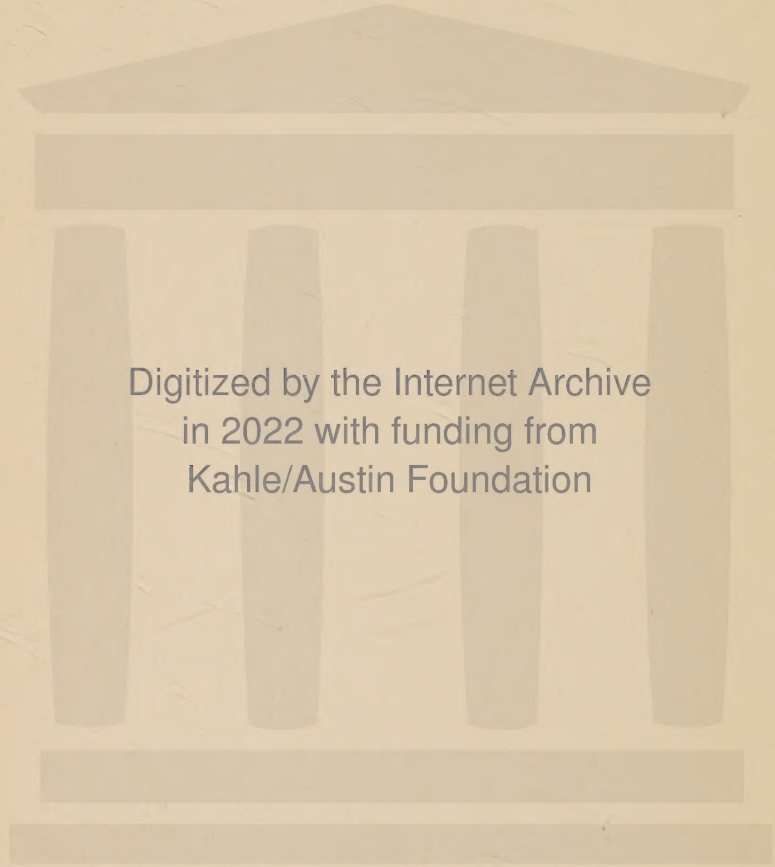
By

Wilbur L. Cross

823.08
C951m

ALBRIGHT COLLEGE
LIBRARY

PRESENTED BY
Wyomissing Public Library


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/modernenglishnov0000wilb

By the Same Author

The History of Henry Fielding

The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne

The Development of the English Novel

The
Modern English Novel

An Address Before the
American Academy of Arts and Letters

By Wilbur L. Cross
Editor of The Yale Review
Sterling Professor of English and Dean of the Graduate School
Yale University

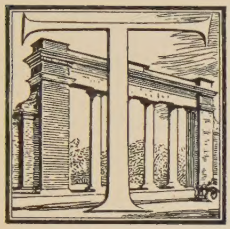
New Haven: Yale University Press
London: Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press
1928

Copyright 1928 by Yale University Press
Printed in the United States of America

823.09
C951m

122928

The Modern English Novel



TWO hundred and fifty years ago Perrault read a poem before the French Academy in which the claim was made that the literature which was then modern surpassed the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome. Thence arose in France and England a famous dispute over the comparative merits of the new and the old learning, which was burlesqued by Swift in *The Battle of the Books*. The great master of irony, taking the side of Greece and Rome, conceded that the moderns, though weak in substance, put for aught he knew more labor into "art and method," resembling in this respect spiders who lurk in dark corners and there weave out of their entrails intricate webs that cannot last long and gather dirt while they do last; whereas the ancients, it was said in words again made memorable by Matthew Arnold's remembrance of them, were like the bees who, never thinking

14395 I

of their skill in building, range in the sunshine "through every corner of nature" and fill their "hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light." No writer ever stated in more felicitous words the difference between the mere technique of literature and its substance and style than in the contrast between ephemeral cobwebs spread to catch unwary readers and the immemorial flights of the bees.

The old controversy between the ancients and the moderns we have with us yet. But just as space has ceased to exist, so time is threatened with annihilation. Time, the novelists who have turned philosophers say, is not actual but relative: there is no common yardstick by which it can be measured either as long or as short; whether it moves fast or slow is dependent upon what comes into one's consciousness. It was a jest of the late Professor Lounsbury that the gods of Homer, living in quiet luxury on Mt. Olympus, were satisfied to take a step once in a thousand years or once in ten thousand years, I forget which. Since those far-distant saecular

ages the passage of time has been enormously quickened, especially since the summer of 1914. When Swift marshalled his two armies for battle, two thousand years separated the moderns from the ancients. The interval is now approaching the vanishing point; a decade now counts for a millennium. As viewed by the young generation, the novelists who were in their prime before the Great War have been ancients for some years. They belong to a past dimly apprehended, to a history that is fast becoming legendary, in the view of some to a sick civilization, given over to talk and inhibited from action like the characters in the novels of Henry James. Wells and Galsworthy and Bennett still carry on, but being of the old order they are unable to re-create in art the mentality of a new world; they try to penetrate it, but they merely hover above it helplessly. The modern novel which was once theirs, has passed on to others, from whom it is in turn slipping away. "Whenever I hear of the new art," the Earl of Balfour has said, "I know that it is going to be the old art within a year or two."

So it has ever been in fiction since Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*. Having been born before the Armistice, I have seen the novel that is called "modern," several times over. Invariably attention has been directed towards changes in her looks and behavior since she was last exhibited. She has appeared with and without the "straws of life in her hair." This is a phrase taken from H. G. Wells. She has been long and she has been short, sometimes "long-short," and sometimes "short-long"; she has been lean and she has bulged beyond the line of beauty. Around 1890, before and after, she assumed a multitude of shapes and colors, chameleonlike, as her passions were awakened by the conflicting thought and emotions of the mauve decade. The ancients were then the mid-Victorians as well as all who had written novels before Dickens and Thackeray. To the oncoming generation to which I belonged it was an interesting and amusing sight to see novelists—seven or eight of them—who were standing in the front row, attacking the ghosts of their predecessors in prefaces, introductions, and detached essays,

while at the same time arguing openly or by indirection for their own superiority. "Debunking" is but a new name for an old pastime. Though they did not agree on what the novel was or on what it should be, one saying and another denying that it ought to show "an enthusiasm for humanity," they were one in the conviction that the ancients were mostly in the wrong, and that the novel in new hands was well on the way towards a finer and truer art.

The discussion centered round technique with substance relegated to the periphery. Stevenson, who had written beautiful romances and discovered in human nature Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, revamped Swift's web, leaving out of course the disreputable spider. The threads of a narrative, he insisted, should be brought together in "a web" of definite "pattern" or "texture" so as to resemble a piece of exquisite tapestry. Rhythm, in distinction from blank verse, which English prose had once had but had since lost, should be restored. On both counts Stevenson proved by an examination of *Guy Mannering* that Scott was clearly guilty.

Rarely was there any semblance of art, he declared, in the great magician's "ill-written, ragged" books. And concerning Dickens, Stevenson asked, How could David Copperfield report verbatim conversations that took place before he was born or while he lay asleep in his basket? A novelist who knows his business never carries his hero's memory backward to the cradle. The right way is to leave omniscience to the powers above and to put into a novel only what the characters see or hear, as had been done, for instance, in *Treasure Island*. A point of view—preferably of a single character—should be taken at the beginning and maintained to the end with never a shift in the vision.

In contrast with the slipshod art of a former era, Stevenson set up Meredith, whose *Egoist* he had read "four or five times" over, and whose *Richard Feverel* contained one or two dramatic scenes unequalled since Shakespeare. So people began to read Meredith, where they saw the egocentric male anatomized more completely than ever before; where they saw women, too, who, quite different from "the rose

pink" or "the dirty drab" girls of the past, were made fit companions for men—reasonably honest and strong physically or intellectually, who swam against running waters or ruled statesmen behind the visible scene. Not George Eliot, who had just been lowered into her grave at Highgate, but George Meredith, it was declared, was the first novelist who had ever had a clean-cut philosophy of life. The earlier Victorians were all sentimentalists whose chief occupation had been to "fiddle harmonics on the strings of sensualism." Their humor, rarely inherent in scene and character, was made up for a public that read comic almanacs. For true comedy, free from sentimentalism, it was necessary, except for sporadic instances, to go back to Congreve and Molière. The old racial laugh of Fielding, boisterous and vulgar, was long since outmoded. We should never laugh, we were instructed, at anything Meredith's characters might say or do. We should only smile.

A little later came George Moore, who complained that Thackeray was too reticent, that he had a way of stopping short on Becky Sharp

when he should have gone on. As the siren slipped from the rock into the murky sea, Thackeray had remarked that the reader might take it for granted that she was about no good down there. This was not enough for his critic, who wanted to know precisely what Becky Sharp was doing under the dark waters. So, improving upon *Vanity Fair*, George Moore wrote *Esther Waters*.

There was Howells also, long an ornament of the American Academy. His style, wit, and humor, held in firm restraint, belonged to the best traditions of English literature. He wrote, we said, the first American novel. His Silas Lapham was typical of young men who by the hundreds had left the farm, made fortunes and lost them, and returned home at last for the end of their days, thus completing a perfect if not a happy circle. But Howells was almost as irreverent as Stevenson of the mid-Victorians, whom he called "a purblind race," no one of whom had the art of Turgenev or the vision of Tolstoi. For him *Vanity Fair* was "crude, heavy-handed, caricatured." "I cannot laugh," he averred,

"any more at Pickwick or Sam Weller, or weep for little Nell or Paul Dombey." As time went on, Howells came to distrust more or less fiction even such as he himself was writing, and looked forward to a time when "fiction the most faithful may be superseded by a still more faithful form of contemporaneous history."

Already an epidemic of local-colorists and naturalists had broken out along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to Virginia and the mountains of Tennessee out through the middle west and across to California. The tales these writers told were supposed to have actually happened; their characters were said to be portraits of real people living or just dead, though they were given new names so as to prevent identification. Hamlin Garland, for instance, a young radical out of the corn-belt, who stood for "freedom in life" and "truth in art," published a short story under the title of *The Return of a Private*, and afterward incorporated it, with slight alteration, in *A Son of the Middle Border* as recollections of his own father's return after the Civil War to a little cabin in

Wisconsin. An outcome of this close relationship between fact and fiction was Mrs. Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, wherein a tragic story was shaped to a beautiful form without disturbing greatly, I dare say, incidents as they had really occurred.

The light of Hardy then illumined the whole realm of English fiction. In contrast with his contemporaries Hardy was mostly silent on the deficiencies of the novelists who had come and gone before him. He was more like the bee intent upon the wax wherewith to build his own habitation. He asked us not to be overcritical of Richardson's inaccurate observation of externals, but to regard rather the little fat printer's insistence that the real life of people is their emotional life within, to be read by their words and deeds; for it is "the waves of human emotion" that sweep men on to their fate. Likewise, instead of seeking out one of Scott's wandering tales in order to damn it, Hardy hit upon *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which seemed to him "an almost perfect specimen of form"; and "the first thirty chapters" of *Vanity Fair*

he instanced "as well-nigh complete in artistic presentation, along with their other magnificent qualities." Still, despite fine novels of the past, Hardy thought that "the art of writing them is as yet in its youth, if not in its infancy." All that any novelist can be expected to do, he held, is to make a few improvements here and there. Despite his modest reticence, we saw then as we see now that Hardy extended, far beyond Balzac and others, man's personality back into his inheritance and out into his social and intellectual environment, including the mystical influence of moor and woodland, through all of which ran the thread of man's destiny for weal or for woe.

While a century was slipping by, "a fit audience though few" watched Henry James in his progress through three phases of his art, from the clear objectivity of a Howells into impressionism, where the lines of plot and character were purposely blurred, and on into an almost complete transfer of a dramatic action from outer incident to the minds of his characters, who talked endlessly round and round things

that seemed not to happen. At times narrative and description were confined to what might transpire in the give and take of dialogue. The traditional semblance of finality in the fate of his characters by their death or their marriage or their divorce was rejected. In his latest manner his novels were mental or emotional phases in the life of a small group of men and women. All that came after was silence. The threads of his carefully wrought designs sometimes, as in *The Ambassadors*, converged in the consciousness of a central character, not for the display of a personality as in autobiography, but in order to give a single, unified mental picture of the whole psychological episode. James thus applied to mental phenomena that unshifting point of view which Stevenson endeavored to maintain in the narration of external events. Words took the place of deeds.

These novelists in the course of nature had to give way to others, of whom five—four of them still living—reflected the outlook of our race in the years preceding the Great War. Then

in their prime they were preëminently the modern novelists.

When Kipling's Anglo-Indian tales first reached the western world, they were classed with the empty adventures then current. There was a bored wit who longed for the time

> When the Rudyards cease from Kipling
> And the Haggards ride no more.

Compared with Stevenson's, Kipling's style and technique seemed loose and disjointed at a time when the public was unaccustomed to the directness and strength of the real language of men. The impression did not last long. Soon Kipling was proclaimed the great master of the short story, which by pulling fore and aft he sometimes stretched into a novel as in *Kim*. Before he left the East, he had spread under our eyes the whole panorama of civil and military India with the natives in the background, and brought home to Englishmen the consciousness of Empire.

Similarly Conrad's first novel appeared to a reviewer in America's best critical journal of

the period as but "a mob of raging heathen, fighting for rum and wives on the banks of a river in Borneo." Another few years elapsed, and readers came under the enchantment of the Malay islands and shores with men who go down to the sea in ships vibrating with human passions and deeds. Little by little it became clear that what fascinated and perplexed Conrad was the mystery of man's conduct and fate, whether on land or in "the great world of waters."

Galsworthy discovered among the merchants and bankers of Victorian England the idea of property extending to the absolute ownership of one's wife, as if that were ever possible; and so complete was his portraiture of three or four generations of Forsytes that we believed him, forgetting the history of man, whose possessive instinct has been equally fierce since anything whatever has been known about him on this earth. One should not quarrel overmuch, however, with the generalization of a great novelist, though it be but half true, which enabled him to expose and repudiate an age in which art,

literature, manners, and morals were made subservient to the ideals and hypocrisies of a commercial upper-middle class whose position was buttressed by the laws of the realm.

Of other antecedents, Bennett found the symbol of life in industrial England, creating for his purpose the Five Towns, whose streets, buildings, and inhabitants he rendered in full outer detail, on the theory that nothing round about them should be left out if we are to know people as they are. The artist, Schiller had said, may be known by what he omits. But who can decide by a selective process, it was now asked, what incidents in a life have significance and what have none? So Bennett, avoiding the difficult problem of exclusion, put everything in. This was for English fiction a new procedure, which has had an immense influence on the novel in the United States as well as in England. Sinclair Lewis, for example, consumes a hundred pages in depicting a day, from sunrise to sunset, in the career of Babbitt.

Of all his contemporaries Wells took the most comprehensive view of the function of

the novel, letting his mind play over the social and scientific theories of his times as they arose, going backward to primitive civilizations for contrast and forward to far-distant centuries in visions of a new and happier world. When tired of the earth he made trips to Mars and the moon for what he might see there. He was the most modern of the moderns.

Neither Wells, however, nor any of his contemporaries whom I have named is accepted by the new generation that is upon us. Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett, Rebecca West affectionately calls "the uncles." No one of them, according to Virginia Woolf, looks at life directly. Wells's imagination strays away from men and women who find life difficult into utopias which have no connection with the world as it is or as it ever can be. Galsworthy is drawn off from his characters by an eagerness to denounce a civilization that has produced them. Bennett builds villas in murky districts within sight of kilns, smoking chimneys, and stagnant water, but leaves it to the reader to imagine what sort of people live in the habitations he has provided

for them at a rental of thirty or sixty pounds a year. And of Conrad, Rose Macaulay remarks that his ship is already sinking below the horizon.

Kipling, it is still admitted, gave us the pageant of India, but the soul of India that lies beneath color and movement escaped him—which is perfectly true, as anyone may see who has read *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster, wherein, thrice shifting his point of view in a manner that Stevenson would have condemned, the author presents the native as he appears to himself, as he appears to the British official, and as he really is when his mind is laid bare, revealing "a civilization which the West can disturb but will never acquire." The comparison is of course wide of the mark. Kipling is essentially a romancer. Forster is a psychologist. Each has accomplished his purpose, which has been to tell the story of life honestly, in accordance with his own temperament.

Of the late Victorians, Stevenson, who smartly castigated Scott and Dickens, has perhaps suffered most, though Chesterton, himself

said to be in retrograde, has just come to a lively defense of him. Stevenson's style, once beautiful, is described by Swinnerton as thin and imitative of bad models. Stevenson loved words more than ideas. He had no theme, his aim being simply to give pleasure. If romance is now dead, adds the author of *Nocturne*, it is because Stevenson as a rule was content to rework by clever craftsmanship the old conventions of a discredited art, and so failed, except here and there, to invest romance with characters that came within his personal vision. Silas Lapham, the Boston commercial adventurer, has been hustled off the pavement by George F. Babbitt of the Middle West, who, while not neglectful of his own interests, was more concerned with boosting the town of Zenith to "unlimited greatness." Since then Babbitt has been pushed to the wall by an American who ended his career in the electric chair. In general the descent from one so-called American novel to another has been accompanied by a dismal disintegration of style. *An American Tragedy*, some think, reads much bet-

ter in its German translation than in the language in which it was originally written.

Fate or retribution as worked out by the late Victorians has gone out of fashion. The old moral formulas that have been inherited from Greek tragedy are deemed artificial. Life as depicted by May Sinclair and others is rather a series of more or less disconnected scenes or episodes with only casual suggestion of the consequences inherent in anything that may be said or done. A man who sows the wind no longer reaps the whirlwind. Naturally, in a dying moral world, Meredith's philosophy, to quote a sentence from E. M. Forster, "has not worn well." The bloom has all gone from Meredith's phrases, and his great scenes have lost their splendor. The fame of Hardy was canonized by his death. And yet there has always been an undercurrent of severe criticism. Hardy sacrificed, it is said, his characters to a sombre philosophy, giving them no chance; and when he came to a final explanation of the disasters that overtake mankind, he attributed them, in an Aeschylean phrase, to the President of the Immortals, who

is really none other than an angry Jehovah under another name. In the main, however, Hardy has held up well. Against the hard and fast social ideas of Victorian England Hardy took that liberal view of human relations which has since become current. Tess in spite of what happened remained to the last "a pure woman," and *Jude the Obscure* was, from one point of view, an arraignment of the idea that "merely taking a woman to church and putting a ring upon her finger" should mean continuous existence together when "love hath an end" and the wife jumps out of the window to escape her husband. The world was ready for Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, exposing the hypocrisy of filial affection and duty, and for the suffragists and flappers of Wells's *Ann Veronica*. It was a natural progress from the marriage of limited duration advocated by Meredith to the break-up of family ties and to the new glad freedom of the sexes.

The fiercest attack ever made upon James came within the purview of the author himself, who in a critical article expressed an interest in the novels of H. G. Wells, but wondered what

they were all about. Thereupon Wells sent him for perusal a burlesque of his mannerisms under the title of *Boon* with preliminary paragraphs in denunciation of his narrow conception of the novel. "His people," Wells told him, "nose out suspicions, hint by hint, link by link. Have you ever known living human beings do that? The thing his novel is *about* is always there. It is like a church lit but without a congregation to distract you, with every light and line focussed on the high altar. And on the altar very reverently placed, intensely there, is a dead kitten, an egg-shell, a bit of string." This criticism of James has been many times repeated by others in a gentler tone. His most ardent admirers agree that his novels were spun out of slight substance, that his characters have few or no associations with the world outside of them, and that he thought less about his men and women than about the pattern in which they were to fit. The snail must fill the shell.

The fact nevertheless remains that the later psychological novel has adopted certain characteristics of James's method, of which the chief

is the direct presentation of character so that we seem to see men and women in the very act of observing, thinking, feeling, and remembering. Some of James's descendants, casting aside his rigid selection of only those mental acts that cohere in a fixed pattern, have professed to give all, however trivial, that passes in the minds of their characters, so that the account may be complete. Their art is analogous to Bennett's, with a shift of the scene from the life outside to the life within. They have no fear of becoming dull as they meander along the stream of semiconsciousness. Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, for all his perverse genius, are the bores of contemporary fiction, with rivals, however, in another set in whom the remembrance of scenes and experiences long since past keep their novels moving simultaneously along three or four different planes which may or may not intersect. Over the question who invented this manner of depicting all the layers of human consciousness there is some dispute. The honor probably belongs to Dorothy Richardson, though Gertrude Stein seems to claim it by a decade. In this way

of writing Sherwood Anderson among American novelists has succeeded best.

Virginia Woolf stands apart from the rest by virtue of the delicate fabric she has woven. No feminine novelist in my memory has shown in her style a like sensitiveness to beauty. "Life," Mrs. Woolf writes, "is not a series of gig lamps, symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semitransparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" Virginia Woolf has tried to get further down than James was able to go beneath the mere apparitions of human behavior into the real self that lies on the threshold of being, frankly admitting that no one can ever quite reach that home of vague and uncertain desires. In *Mrs. Dalloway* she uncovers "an ordinary mind in an ordinary day" through the impressions made upon it by the people whom a London woman in middle age meets and the

142926

memories awakened thereby. Much more subtle is the art of *To the Lighthouse*, which runs along mainly on the plane of the subconscious. What happens, sometimes indicated by sentences within brackets, is mostly off the stage. There is no description apart from the moods of the characters. There is no outward clash of will with will, for the emotions, though at times intense, rarely rise to the surface.

What that inner hidden self may be is inferred, not from the spoken word, but from the movements of the face, which, it is assumed, cannot so easily lie. It is the body that speaks true of the mind, when the eyebrow lifts, when the muscles of the face stiffen or relax, when the lips suddenly tighten in sternness or unexpectedly open in a smile, when wrinkles appear between the eyes and the look grows apprehensive, when the tone of the voice alters or the steady hand quivers for a moment. Out of involuntary acts such as these Virginia Woolf lets her characters give themselves away, in distinction from the characters in Jane Austen's novels, who are made to give themselves away

by their talk when off their guard. Particularly she likes to show how they reshape themselves under varying emotions, like the peevish and deformed dwarf, whose "face lit up in an ecstasy" when she had a chance to display what her well-grown friends did not possess—beautiful feet and beautiful ankles. Fine as is Mrs. Woolf's art, it has probably set for itself an impossible task. Her books have no characters that a reader lives with or long remembers. The light that she flashes upon the dark recesses of their minds is intermittent; it is nowhere continuous as the light of Hardy, which never fades until Tess or Jude or Sue passes out of the last chapter. The novelist has not yet discovered a formula whereby emotions, impulses, and desires lying below the surface of the mind may be moulded into a living personality without the aid of the conscious act and the full-spoken word.

A young writer doubtless does well to take a reactionary attitude towards his elders who have labored in the same vineyard. He gains thereby a point of vantage conducive to the awakening

of such original talent as there may be in him. But a time is likely to come when, on gaining wider knowledge, he sees that his experiments are not so original as he thought they were, perhaps that they have led him where he might better not have gone. Lord Byron relates how he once spent a whole day comparing his own poems and Tom Moore's with some of Pope's and was astonished and mortified to discover how far "the little Queen Anne's man" surpassed both himself and his friend in all the essentials of good verse. The conclusion Byron reached was that the innovations of all the romantic poets "were not worth a damn."

In literary revolts there is always involved an illusion. No writer, however hard he may try, can break the force of tradition. Hardy, who saw clearly, remarked midway in his career that "in fiction there can be intrinsically no new thing at this stage of the world's history. . . . The utmost which each generation can be expected to do is to add one or two strokes toward the selection and shaping of a possible ultimate perfection." These words are exact and true.

The English novel for the past two centuries hangs together in spite of many external differences which more or less fade when they are viewed in perspective. The substance of the novel, it is true, has expanded or contracted in quick response to the prevailing interests and outlook of the public. But human nature has not yet changed materially, perhaps not at all. What makes it seem to have changed more than it has is a transvaluation of old moral ideas—a process which, though always going on, is greatly accelerated by social upheavals such as the Great War. The problem of the novelist has been how best to present his men and women so that his age will understand them. As Swift contended in the passage I quoted at the beginning, the quarrel between the moderns and the ancients, though it may concern what should go into a novel, is primarily over the question of technique.

The course of the novel, it may be inferred, has not been forward in a straight line. It has had a way of curving in upon itself. The young novelist, however much he may resent the ac-

cusation, goes back, it may be unconsciously, to earlier practitioners of his art and modifies and develops what he finds there congenial to his temperament. Is it the satirical manner he would cultivate? He may learn from Smollett as well as from Sinclair Lewis. Is it irony? There is Fielding or Thackeray as well as Galsworthy. Is it sex? He may regale in *Moll Flanders* or in *Many Marriages*. Does he want the facts of birth? He may read *Tristram Shandy* or any one of a score of moderns. If he desires to follow day by day, hour by hour, the emotions of a girl hard pressed by a scoundrel, he has at hand Richardson, who, it was said by his contemporaries, "sounded the depths of the female heart" in the seven volumes of *Clarissa Harlowe*. It was an extraordinary feat since surpassed only by Proust in his fourteen or fifteen volumes of minute analysis.

In the past lie strewn everywhere intimations of all the methods practised by contemporary novelists. At the will of the writer, narrative since Defoe has been direct and indirect, the time sequence has been rigidly followed and it

has been broken up, emphasis has been placed upon the outer act and upon the inner drama, upon plot or design, and from the years immediately preceding the French Revolution often upon instruction. Since Sterne gesture and various muscular movements of the body, including a count of the heartbeats, have been employed to show the working of the mind within. "The lifting of an eyebrow" was a recurrent phrase in Meredith; and George Eliot knew how to interpret "a glance, the quivering of a lip or an eyelid." After them we had the "little brown dimple" that appears for a second in a blonde's pair of blue eyes and is quickly absorbed in "the azure overflow."

The return to the past, however, is never retrogression when considered as a whole. Despite twists and turns, backward and forward movements, the novel is always moving on to new issues. Scene and background and the description of the dress or the appearance of characters are, for instance, all rudimentary in Fielding's novels. These externals were brought into fiction by Scott, from whom it was a cir-

cuitous journey through Balzac to Hardy and Conrad, who interpreted nature through the moods of their characters, endowing things without them with sentient life. Nor is reverie as employed by the Victorians quite the same as that flow of consciousness backward which has come in with the new psychology. Madame Bovary now and then surveys her past for the enlightenment of the reader on certain phases of her conduct. But it never occurred to her to relate through memory all her emotions since childhood, as if they would be interesting in and for themselves apart from the story. "The stream of consciousness," which runs through contemporary fiction, was more directly anticipated by Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, in which the narrative is playfully organized on Locke's theory of "the association of ideas."

Again, in a great scene George Eliot tells her readers about the moods, impulses, and hesitancies of Dr. Lydgate as he drove on leisurely to the infirmary where as a director he was destined to cast a vote that would reveal his inner self. Were George Eliot living and writing to-

day she would not stand off and probe from the outside that wavering mind. She would identify herself more intimately with Dr. Lydgate, depersonalizing herself, so as to create the illusion of direct self-betrayal. The result would be essentially the same, but the art would be different. To go on, Willa Cather in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* has revived chronicle history, older than Froissart; and Thornton Wilder has revived linked biographical sketches, older than Malory, in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. The accomplishments of both are so admirable that one forgets for the moment that they are reshaping ancient literary forms into another beautiful but less substantial art.

These examples are indications of the way that fiction is ever renewing itself. Like all the rest, the novelists that are called modern in the year 1928 have lighted their candles at the fires of their predecessors, though the flames they now display may not look much like the original fires.

A Selective Bibliography

For the use of readers in Contemporary British and American Fiction

The Novel since 1900

Abel Chevally. *The Modern English Novel.* New York, Knopf, 1925.

An excellent book by a French scholar, devoted mainly to the contemporary novel.

André Chevrillon. *Three Studies in English Literature.* English translation. New York, Doubleday, Page, 1923.

Rather formal essays on Kipling and Galsworthy from the French point of view.

Edward Morgan Forster. *Aspects of the Novel.* New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1927.

Gay comment by the author of *A Passage to India* on the art and substance of the modern English novel with some comparisons with French and Russian fiction. No one interested in contemporary fiction should fail to read this book.

Gerald Gould. *The English Novel of To-Day.* London, John Castle, 1924.

An attempt to trace tendencies in contemporary English fiction.

Régis Michaud. *The American Novel To-day.* Boston, Little, Brown, 1928.

The most complete study of the American novelists of the last decade.

The Modern English Novel

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS. *Essays on Modern Novelists.* New York, Macmillan, 1910; and *The Advance of the English Novel.* New York, Dodd, Mead, 1916.

These books contain brilliant surveys of contemporary fiction, down to the dates of their publication.

CARL VAN DOREN. *Contemporary American Novelists.* New York, Macmillan, 1922.

The best survey of American fiction from 1900 to 1920.

Background of the Contemporary English Novel

ERNEST A. BAKER. *The History of the English Novel.* London, Witherby, 1924.

A valuable treatise on fiction in the mediaeval period.

WILBUR L. CROSS. *The Development of the English Novel.* New York, Macmillan, 1899.

This book begins with the Arthurian romances and ends with Kipling. It has a bibliography and a reading list.

LORD ERNLE. *Light Reading of Our Ancestors.* New York, Brentano's, 1927.

A delightful account, though uncritical, of fiction from the Greek romances to Sir Walter Scott.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH. *The English Novel.* New York, Scribner's, 1894.

A pioneer book with illuminating comment on the novel from mediaeval romance to Sir Walter Scott.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY. *The English Novel.* New York, Dutton, 1913.

A good survey of English fiction, ending with the Victorian era.

The Modern English Novel

CARL VAN DOREN. *The American Novel.* New York, Macmillan, 1921.

The best brief account of the development of the American novel.

CORNELIUS WEYGANT. *A Century of the English Novel.* New York, Century, 1925.

A pragmatic history with comment on the English novel from Scott to Conrad.

Art and Method

WALTER BESANT. *The Art of Fiction.* London, Chatto.

ARNOLD BENNETT. *Fame and Fiction.* London, Richards; and several essays in *Books and Persons.* London, Chatto.

JOSEPH CONRAD. A number of essays in *Notes on Life and Letters* and *Last Essays;* and "Author's Notes" to the various volumes of the Concord Edition of his *Works.* New York, Doubleday, Page.

JOHN GALSWORTHY. Several essays in *Castles in Spain and Other Screeds;* and Prefaces to his novels in the Manaton Edition of his *Works.* New York, Scribner's.

THOMAS HARDY. Three essays, of which the first is the best, entitled, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction"; "Candour in English Fiction"; and "The Science of Fiction," in *Life and Art by Thomas Hardy*, edited by Ernest Brennecke, Jr. New York, Greenberg.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS. *Criticism and Fiction.* New York, Harper.

HENRY JAMES. "The Art of Fiction" in *Partial Portraits;* and "The New Novel" (1914) in *Notes on Novelists with Some Other Notes.* New York, Scribner's.

RUDYARD KIPLING. *The Art of Fiction.* London, Allen.

PERCY LUBBOCK. A masterly analysis of the novelist's art centering round Henry James in *The Craft of Fiction.* New York, Scribner's.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. "A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's"; "A Gossip on Romance"; and "A Humble Remonstrance," in *Memories and Portraits.* Also "On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature," and "A Note on Realism," in *Essays on Literature.* New York, Scribner's.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS. "A General Introduction" to the Atlantic Edition of his *Works,* and especially "The Contemporary Novel" in Vol. IX of this edition. New York, Scribner's.

EDITH WHARTON. *The Writing of Fiction.* New York, Scribner's.

VIRGINIA WOOLF. Lively comment upon Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.* London, The Hogarth Press. See also several essays in *The Common Reader.* New York, Harcourt, Brace.

List of Novels

THE novelists listed here are fairly representative of the new phases of British and American fiction since 1900, immediately following the great writers who flourished towards the close of the last century. Collections of short stories are mentioned only incidentally if at all. Novelists whose work is of an outstanding character or is of particular interest in the year 1928, are marked with an asterisk. No distinction is made between the real and the assumed names of the authors.

British

*MAX BEERBOHM. *Zuleika Dobson;* and *A Christmas Garland* (parodies or burlesques of contemporary writers).

*ARNOLD BENNETT. *Buried Alive; The Old Wives' Tale; Clayhanger; Hilda Lessways; These Twain;* and *Riceyman Steps.*

JOHN DAVYS BERESFORD. *The History of Jacob Stahl.*

GEORGE DOUGLAS BROWN. *The House with the Green Shutters.*

*SAMUEL BUTLER. *The Way of all Flesh.*

GILBERT CANNAN. *Three Sons and a Mother.*

*JOSEPH CONRAD. A group of his novels and tales may well be read in the following order: *Youth; The Nigger of the Narcissus; Typhoon; Heart of Darkness; Karain; The Secret Sharer; Freya of the Seven Isles; The*

End of the Tether; Nostromo; and *Lord Jim.* See "The Illusions of Joseph Conrad" in *The Yale Review,* April, 1928.

CLEMENCE DANE. *Legend.*

WALTER DE LA MARE. *The Memoirs of a Midget.*

*JOHN GALSWORTHY. *The Forsyte Saga,* beginning with *The Man of Property* and ending with *Swan Song* (1928).

WALTER LIONEL GEORGE. *The Confessions of Ursula Trent.*

*WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON. *Green Mansions,* with an introduction by John Galsworthy.

ALDOUS LEONARD HUXLEY. *Crome Yellow;* and *Antic Hay.*

*JAMES JOYCE. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* The sale of *Ulysses,* originally published in Paris, is prohibited in England and the United States. Installments of Joyce's latest work are appearing in *transition,* a periodical issuing from Paris, copies of which may be obtained at Brentano's, New York.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH. *Joanna Godden.*

*RUDYARD KIPLING. *Kim;* and *Selected Stories from Kipling,* edited by W. L. Phelps, New York, Doubleday, Page.

*DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE. *The Lost Girl;* and *Women in Love.*

WYNDHAM LEWIS. *Tarr.*

*ROSE MACAULAY. *Potterism;* and *Daisy and Daphne.*

Compton Mackenzie. *Sinister Street.*

William Somerset Maugham. *Of Human Bondage;* and *The Moon and Sixpence.*

Leonard Merrick. *Conrad in Quest of his Youth;* and *The Man Who Understood Women, and other Stories.*

Charles Edward Montague. *Disenchantment;* and *Right off the Map.*

*Edward Morgan Forster. *A Passage to India.*

Dorothy Richardson. A series of novels under the general title of *Pilgrimage,* beginning with *Pointed Roofs,* with an introduction by May Sinclair.

Ethel Sidgwick. *Promise;* and *Succession.*

*May Sinclair. *Mary Olivier;* and *Mr. Waddington of Wyck.*

Gertrude Stein. *The Making of Americans; being the History of a Family's Progress.* Listed here for its strange perversity of style.

Frank Swinnerton. *Nocturne.*

H. M. Tomlinson. *Gallions Reach.*

Hugh Walpole. *The Cathedral;* and *The Green Mirror.*

*Herbert George Wells. His three best novels are *Kipps; Tono-Bungay;* and *The History of Mr. Polly.* Second to them are *Love and Mr. Lewisham; Ann Veronica;* and *Christina Alberta's Father.* A good example of his "scientific romances" is *The Time Machine.* His Utopia is briefly given in *Men like Gods.* Among his novels dealing with social and political questions are *Mr.*

Britling Sees it Through; The World of William Clissold; and *Meanwhile.* See the article entitled "The Mind of H. G. Wells" in *The Yale Review,* January, 1927.

REBECCA WEST. *The Judge.*

*VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Mrs. Dalloway;* and *To the Lighthouse.*

American

*SHERWOOD ANDERSON. *Winesburg, Ohio; The Triumph of the Egg;* and *Dark Laughter.*

*JAMES BRANCH CABELL. *The Cream of the Jest;* and *Jurgen.*

*WILLA CATHER. *My Antonia; A Lost Lady;* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop.*

WINSTON CHURCHILL. *Mr. Crewe's Career;* and *The Inside of the Cup.*

*FLOYD DELL. *Moon-Calf;* and *The Briary-Bush.*

JOHN DOS PASSOS. *Three Soldiers;* and *Manhattan Transfer.*

THEODORE DREISER. *An American Tragedy.*

JOHN ERSKINE. *Helen of Troy.*

*EDNA FERBER. *The Girls;* and *So Big.*

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER. *The Brimming Cup.*

WALDO DAVID FRANK. *City Block;* and *Holiday.*

*ZONA GALE. *Miss Lulu Bett;* and *Faint Perfume.*

Hamlin Garland. His best work, as seen in *Main-Traveled Roads, Prairie Folks,* and *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly,* anticipates contemporary realism in American fiction.

*Ellen Glasgow. *The Miller of Old Church;* and *Virginia.*

Charles Gilman Norris. Brass.

Henry Sydnor Harrison. *Queed;* and *V. V.'s Eyes.*

*Joseph Hergesheimer. *The Three Black Pennys; Java Head; Linda Condon;* and *Cytherea.*

*Robert Herrick. *The Common Lot;* and *Together.*

*Henry James. The phases of his art are well represented by *Roderick Hudson; What Maisie Knew;* and one of the following novels: *The Awkward Age; The Ambassadors;* or *The Golden Bowl.*

*Sinclair Lewis. *Main Street;* and *Babbitt.* His later novels, like *Elmer Gantry,* carry satire to the point where it ceases to be art.

Jack London. *The Call of the Wild.*

Christopher Morley. *Thunder on the Left.*

Meredith Nicholson. *The House of a Thousand Candles.*

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts. *The Time of Man.*

Anne Douglas Sedgwick. *Tante;* and *The Little French Girl.*

Upton Sinclair. *The Jungle.*

*Booth Tarkington. *The Magnificent Ambersons;* and *Alice Adams.*

The Modern English Novel

*Edith Wharton. *The House of Mirth; Ethan Frome;* and *The Age of Innocence.*

*Thornton Wilder. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey.*

*Owen Wister. *The Virginian;* and *Lady Baltimore.*

Elinor Wylie. *Jennifer Lorn.*

DATE DUE

GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

823.08
C951m
122928
Cross, Wilbur L.
AUTHOR
The Modern English Novel
TITLE
DATE DUE
BORROWER'S NAME
Cross
122928

823.08 C951m
Cross, Wilbur Lucius,
The modern English novel
3 1856 00060987 3

W7-CLI-935